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SUBJECT: KOSOVO: WORKING GROUP ON PUBLIC OUTREACH HOLDS
FIRST MEETING

SENSITIVE BUT UNCLASSIFIED, PLEASE PROTECT ACCORDINGLY.

11. (SBU) SUMMARY: USOP called and hosted the organizing meeting of a new Working Group on Public Outreach, created under the ICO/UNMIK/U.S./PISG transitional framework now in place. (Note: Progress on overall transition efforts are reported septel.) Representatives from the Unity Team, government, and opposition, as well as the OSCE, ICO, and UNMIK discussed current strategies, challenges and next steps. There was general consensus that coordination and support for public outreach to explain the final settlement details to the Kosovo public was long overdue, and that the working group should be located in the OSCE) as a politically neutral party) but with ample participation from the Kosovars, as the real stakeholders in this process, and technical support from the USG. END SUMMARY.

12. (SBU) The initial organizational meeting of the Working Group on Public Outreach met December 20, 2006, to establish a structure and action plan for a coordinated strategy to ensure public support for the final status package. Attending were representatives from the OSCE, UNMIK, the planning team for the International Civilian Office (ICO), the Unity Team, the Prime Minister,s Office, and opposition parties the Democratic Party of Kosovo (PDK) and ORA. The Democratic League of Kosovo (LDK) representative dropped out at the last minute due to other obligations. The meeting was held at USAID, with the COM chairing and POL, PD and USAID officers in attendance.

13. (SBU) Discussion centered around creation of a mechanism to bring together existing, but disparate, efforts on public diplomacy, as well as how to expand the reach of these efforts in a targeted fashion aimed at both Kosovo Albanians and Kosovo Serbs. OSCE described its own outreach program, coordinated with UNMIK and KFOR; according to the OSCE rep, OSCE has been running priority assessments of individual communities (to determine &hot spots8) and issues (decentralization, reconciliation, peace and prosperity), and tailoring its outreach programs accordingly. The tools for OSCE's outreach campaign include town hall meetings, closed meetings, and media outreach, with a particular focus on

utilizing "multipliers" -- i.e., finding ways to enhance the resonance of settlement-related issues by building several events in concert with each other. Recent OSCE/UNMIK/KFOR-sponsored programs have included a program for Kosovo Serb community leaders in Belgrade (Belgrade press headline: &Kosovo Serbs want to stay in Kosovo8) and a wide-ranging ethnic-Serb NGO round table in Gracanica.

14. (SBU) The Prime Minister,s Spokeswoman and her deputy described the PISG public information strategy, developed separately in a forum with internationals and government leaders comprising what they call a "Public Information Coordination Group." Their office coordinates and develops specific messages, including the PM,s weekly radio address, and plans events. The Prime Minister has conducted seven public meetings outside of Pristina so far, in collaboration with the local government leaders and also the KPS.

15. (SBU) Other group members commented critically on the failure to develop a unified outreach strategy, and agreed that the formation of this new working group could help provide the impetus needed to bring the various strands together. They also agreed on a need for a broader, media-based campaign to raise awareness of key issues related to the settlement, recognizing that the timeline is very short before the arrival of UN Special Envoy Ahtisaari with his set of proposals.

16. (SBU) Working group members were tasked with providing detailed descriptions and matrices of their current strategies and projects to each other before the next meeting, scheduled for December 28 at the OSCE. There was also general agreement that the OSCE, as a neutral player, could usefully serve as the locus for the working group effort, particularly since this would help alleviate mutual

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suspicion between the government/PM's office and opposition members of the Unity Team. Unity Team members were asked to provide a co-chair for the working group, a prospect they said they would refer to the UT leadership for approval. USOP undertook to provide technical assistance for the media aspects of the campaign, as well as look at providing personnel to the effort. At the December 28 meeting, the group will further develop its organizational structure, assess the budgetary needs involved, discuss the development of messages/themes for a media campaign, and make additional technical preparations to find the right commercial PR partners, etc.

17. (SBU) COMMENT: This was quite literally the first time all the relevant actors were able to come together, under USOP auspices, to begin consideration of a broad outreach campaign to prepare Kosovars for the settlement. Time is tight, and many details remain to be worked out, but the framework now exists to try and bring the parties together. We will follow up intensively to nurture this project along. USOP understands Department may be able to identify an FSO for several months to assist, which would be very welcome. We would appreciate as well any messages that UNOSEK is prepared to endorse prior to the Ahtisaari visit, which could help form the basis of the media campaign that eventually emerges. END COMMENT.

18. (SBU) U.S. Office Pristina clears this cable in its entirety for release to U.N. Special Envoy Martti Ahtisaari. K Aidanow